

# **Zika and Pregnancy: What Pregnant Women Need to Know**

*[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

Pregnancy is an exciting time in a woman's life. There's so much to learn, including ways to protect yourself and your family from health risks. Recently, information about Zika, its link to birth defects, and the number of pregnant women affected in the U.S. have been making headlines. As a pregnant woman, you may have questions. I'll explain what Zika is and what it means for pregnant women. Then, I'll talk about ways you can protect your pregnancy.

First, here are some basics. Zika is mostly spread through mosquito bites. It can also be sexually transmitted from an infected man to his sex partners. There is no vaccine or medicine for Zika. Many people with Zika don't even know they have it. The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting from several days to a week. The most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, joint pain, and red eyes. People usually don't get sick enough to go to the hospital, and they very rarely die of Zika.

So, why is it so important for pregnant women to understand more about Zika? For pregnant women, the concern is that Zika virus can be passed to the fetus during pregnancy or around the time of delivery. Infection during pregnancy can cause a serious birth defect called microcephaly, and other problems in babies. During pregnancy, a fetus's head grows because the brain is growing. Microcephaly occurs when a baby's brain hasn't developed properly during pregnancy or has stopped growing after birth.

There's still a lot we don't know about Zika virus, including how likely it is that Zika virus passes to a fetus or baby or results in birth defects when a woman is pregnant and becomes infected. CDC and other organizations are working as quickly as possible to try to answer these questions and others about Zika.

The good news is that there are steps you can take to protect yourself and your family during pregnancy.

The first thing you can do is avoid travel to areas with Zika. If you must travel to one of these areas, talk to your doctor first. If you or your male partner have recently traveled to an area with Zika, talk to your doctor about your travel even if you or your partner don't feel sick.

The second thing you can do to protect yourself and your family is take steps to prevent mosquito bites. There are many ways to prevent mosquito bites:

- Use EPA-registered insect repellents. When used as directed, they are safe and effective for pregnant and breastfeeding women. Always apply sunscreen before repellent, and don't spray repellent underneath clothes.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants to protect your arms and legs.
- And stay and sleep in places with air conditioning and window and door screens to keep mosquitoes outside. If air-conditioned and screened rooms are not available or if sleeping outdoors, sleep under a bed net.

The third thing you can do to protect yourself and your family is to take steps to prevent getting Zika through sex. Zika virus can be sexually transmitted from a male partner who's infected with Zika. Right now, we don't know how long Zika virus stays in a man's semen. If you are pregnant and have a male partner who lives in or has traveled to an area with Zika, either use condoms the right way, every time you have sex, or don't have sex while pregnant. Not having sex while you're pregnant is the best way to be sure you don't get Zika from sex.

So remember: avoid travel to areas with Zika, use repellent and cover up, and use a condom or don't have sex if your male partner may have Zika. And if you develop the symptoms of Zika, see your doctor right away for testing.

CDC is working around the clock to learn more about Zika and how it affects pregnancy and babies. Get the latest information on CDC's Zika website: [cdc.gov/zika](http://cdc.gov/zika).

*[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit CDC.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.*